

Wang Hao brushed aside by Ma Long in semi

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Wang Hao had no answer for Ma Long in truth

MA LONG A CLASS APART IN MEN'S SEMI AS HE PUTS OUT WANG HAO

Ma Long, the world no.1, beat the world no.2, Wang Hao, also of China, 11-2, 11-4, 10-12, 8-11, 11-2, 11-4 in a ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals mens' singles semi-final clash which was technically and tactically fascinating but not an edge of the seat thriller.

Ma, the top seed and twice an ITTF Pro Tour Grand Finals mens' singles winner, is the man in form, having won the previous two Pro Tour events as well as the 2011 Asia Cup. He totally dominated the first two games with his serves, touch play and power forehands allowing him to go 6-0 up in the first.

Wang made many errors trying to keep Ma out or get in first himself, gaining his few points mostly with his reverse side, penhold backhand loop.

But Wang is not the 2010 world champion, twice Olympic silver medallist, and thrice World Cup winner for nothing (and until September the world no.1). He began to get his play together in the third game, starting from winning the first point in a big counter-topspinning rally, probably the best of the match.

The rest of the game was 'nip and tuck', with both players opening and counter-attacking on both wings, but although Ma led at 9-7, it was Wang who finished more strongly to take it 12-10, the first game Ma had dropped throughout the entire tournament.

The sixth game continued in a similar vein, but another long attacking rally at 6-6, finished by Wang with a big cross court forehand, which indicated his growing confidence. He then took the next point with a punched backhand-block.

Wang seemed to have made a mistake when he called a time out at 8-7 to consolidate his advantage – and then promptly served in the net! However, he recovered his composure to take the next three points and the game.

The last two games reverted to what had happened in the first two, with Ma Long, if anything even more dominant and complete, both in tight play and in power flicking and driving on both forehand and backhand. He simply both closed Wang Hao down and powered him out, a real class act.

He will now play the winner of world champion Zhang Jike (China) and Gao Ning (Singapore).

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